



Vanuatu in "immediate" need in wake of catastrophic Cyclone Pam – Linking the World to deploy disaster response teams

Linking the World has been closely monitoring the disaster in Vanuatu and is working quickly to assess and rapidly respond with humanitarian aid.

DALLAS, TEXAS , USA, March 16, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Saturday, March 14th, the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu took a direct hit from Cyclone Pam, a Category-5 storm with winds over 185mph that hovered over the archipelago for twenty-four plus hours. Their entire infrastructure has been destroyed, including the main bridge that links the capital city, Port Vila to its main hospital. The principal airport is closed to commercial flights with only limited military flights being able to land, carrying initial aid shipments.

"The people of Vanuatu need us now, as they endeavor to face post-storm issues that are life-threatening and overwhelming", said [Mina Chang](#), CEO of [Linking the World](#). "As a global community we can and will help rebuild their communities with dignity, self sufficiency and resiliency." Linking the World is currently preparing teams to arrive within days, carrying at least [17 pallets](#) of immediate critical supplies including first aid, water filtration, shelter materials and more.

Over the weekend an Oxfam spokesperson stated that the storm is "likely to be one of the worst disasters ever seen in the Pacific." World Vision, an NGO with aid workers on the ground at the time of the storm, reports it has been unable to contact more than 30 of its staff. The damage is not limited to Vanuatu as the path of Cyclone Pam crossed other Pacific islands, including Kiribati and the Solomon Islands.

Today small aircraft and helicopters began reconnaissance over Vanuatu's 65 outlying inhabited islands to assess damage and identify routes of safe passage for aid efforts. Disaster response teams will be coordinated by the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Immediate priorities are to respond with shelter, food and safe drinking water. The local water supplies have been heavily contaminated.

Extreme difficulty of response to this disaster is compounded by the nation's remote location, with the Port Vila lying over 1,000 miles from Australia's east coast, and 1,300 miles from New Zealand. Lack of power and communications across the whole of Vanuatu is paralyzing the local communities self-response and hampering relief planning and needs assessment. Vanuatu President, Baldwin Lonsdale reported, "the storm has all but wiped out all development of recent years, and we will have to rebuild everything." Food will be a considerable long-term issue, as much of the population's survival is based on subsistence farming and their crops have been destroyed.

Initial aerial surveillance confirms that the massive devastation, but there is not a clear understanding of what's happening with people on the ground. It is believed that that over 150,000 people are displaced and over 75,000 of those are children.

As aid trickles in, there are no reliable estimates of storm-related deaths. It is feared that the death

toll will continue to climb long after the storm, and among those will be children who are most vulnerable. Without access to medical care, they will be lost to dysentery and infection.

Today as aid began to reach the capital city of Port Vila, where 90% of homes have suffered enormous damage, the broader outlook is dark. Initial reports on the outlying islands are considerably worse, where entire villages were obliterated. Recovery will take years of concerted effort in the face of a high likelihood of the re-occurrence of similar disaster.

Before this small island nation can even begin to dig out from the rubble, the populace and disaster response teams must brace themselves for even more. Cyclone Nathan is brewing over Queensland, Australia and could reach Vanuatu later this week.

About Linking the World

Since 1997, Linking The World has been saving and improving lives in the world's toughest places since 1997. Our network of committed humanitarians have responded to the global challenges of disaster, conflict and extreme poverty; enabling individuals, families and communities to survive crisis and build sustainable futures in forty-three countries. The mission of Linking the World is to deliver humanitarian aid that builds communities marked by self-reliance, sustainable infrastructures and lasting change. As an international NGO, the organization is leading with aggressive initiatives focused on expansion of strategic partnerships and innovative field uses of technology for highly improved situational assessment in disaster response settings.

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